

*Salmalia* and *Erythrina* and even from toddy pots hung up on date palms, but we do not recall having read of their stalking cicadas along the branches of trees.

The cicadas were extremely numerous calling from many trees and we later saw more egrets in small parties of 3 to 5 perched on trees in different places apparently for the same

MADHURIMA SOCIETY,  
M. G. ROAD, KANDIVLI (WEST),  
BOMBAY-400 067.

C/20 KASTUR MAHAL,  
SION, BOMBAY-400 022,  
August 21, 1982.

purpose. Though they were unable to catch the insects settled on the under surface of the branches on which the egrets were perched, this appears to be another instance of the adaptability of this bird which has no doubt helped it to retain its numbers around Bombay, and also to establish itself in different parts of the world.

S. G. MONGA

PARVISH PANDYA

#### 8. UNUSUAL PLUMAGE IN A CATTLE EGRET *BUBULCUS IBIS* *COROMANDUS* (BODDAERT)

On 6th June 1982, while visiting the Borivli National Park with Mr. Humayun Abdulali, we stopped to watch a large number of Cattle Egrets *B. ibis coromandus* (Boddaert) feeding in a semi-flooded grass field by the road. We counted 17 in all-white and 22 in breeding plumage. The latter group included a strikingly coloured bird which had the usual yellowish orange plumes on its head and breast, pale pink legs with the rest of the body a delicate rosy pink, and with absolutely no trace of white anywhere.

A reference to Thomson's *DICTIONARY OF BIRDS* (1964, page 643) reveals a note to the effect that the plumage of some birds does not depend upon any structural character but on the infiltration of the feathers with chemical substances derived from the natural food

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of the species, the absence of which in captivity may lead to loss of colour. There is pink suffusion in the plumages of some birds like Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae) and Goosanders (*Mergus merganser*) that live on small aquatic animals.

This phenomena does not appear to have been observed in the Cattle Egret (*B. ibis coromandus*) and it would be interesting to see how long the colour remains and whether it appears in other individuals also. I understand from Mr. Abdulali that he recently noted several species of flamingos at Slimbridge, U.K. which had quantities of "Carotin" included in the food offered to them. Each species acquired the red or pink in that part of the plumage peculiar to itself, the distribution being presumably genetically controlled.

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